

2012-2013 BENIN COUNTRY GUIDELINES FOR U.S. FULBRIGHT SCHOLARS AND STUDENTS

The Fulbright Program is sponsored and administered by the Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) and awards scholarships to lecture, conduct research, and study abroad. Here, the program is managed by the Public Affairs Section (PAS) of the U.S. Embassy in Cotonou, Benin.

This document contains **summary** information about the Fulbright award, logistical and program support provided through ECA, contact information for PAS or the U.S. Embassy, and advisory information about your host country. These guidelines are an important resource, and should be reviewed prior to departing for your host country. This document may be supplemented by PAS during your arrival orientation at post. Please note that this information is subject to change.

THE PUBLIC AFFAIRS SECTION OF THE U.S. EMBASSY IN BENIN

PAS Cotonou is located in the Centre Culturel Américain, Boulevard de France, près du Conseil de L'Entente et en face de l'Hôtel Novotel Orisha. The U.S. Embassy is located on rue Caporal Anani Bernard. The Public Affairs Officer (PAO) Douglas Johnston is responsible for the Fulbright Program in Benin. Roxane Bapuuroh is the Public Diplomacy Cultural Affairs Assistant, who assists in the coordination of the Fulbright Program. Contact them at the following numbers: tel: (229) 21 30-03-12 / 21 30-07-68; fax 21 30-03-84. The diplomatic pouch address is:

Douglas Johnston
Public Affairs Officer
2120 Cotonou Pl.
Washington, DC 20521-2120

The PAO may be reached at JohnstonDE@state.gov. The Public Diplomacy Cultural Affairs Assistant may be reached at BapuurohMSR2@state.gov.

YOUR FULBRIGHT GRANT AND THE BINATIONAL NATURE OF THE PROGRAM

The Fulbright Program is administered in accordance with regulations established by the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board (FSB). The Board has ruled that Fulbright grant funds cannot duplicate benefits received under other auspices. Therefore, grantees who receive host government or host institution financial contributions (for example, international travel, per diem/ subsistence/ housing allowance) in cash or kind do not receive allowances for these grant benefits. Grantees who receive a concurrent grant to the same country under other auspices may have their Fulbright grants reduced if Fulbright grant benefits are duplicated by the other grant.

Host country governments and institutions support the exchange program through two ways: (a) *monetary contributions*, which result in a sharing of program costs, or (b) *non-monetary assistance* to enhance the exchange experience for the guest scholar.

WHAT THE FULBRIGHT GRANT PROVIDES

For Student Grantees

Fulbright student grants have two components: (1) a base amount and (2) monthly maintenance allowance. Additional funds may be included in your grant as allowances and are described separately. Grant benefits authorized by ECA are paid in U.S. dollars through the Institute of International Education (IIE).

1. The **base amount** is provided to cover initial or one-time start-up expenses such as:
 - a. Unaccompanied and/or Excess Baggage
 - b. Miscellaneous Costs, such as visa fees, permits, medical exams, immunizations, etc. This is a fixed sum in each grant and may not reimburse all expenses completely.
2. A monthly **maintenance allowance** is provided to cover recurring subsistence needs such as housing, fuel, utilities, and food. The maintenance allowance is based upon the estimated cost of maintaining a modest standard of living in the country of assignment.

For Scholar Grantees

Fulbright senior scholar grants have three components: (1) travel and relocation, (2) monthly maintenance, and (3) monthly stipend. Additional funds may be included in your grant as special allowances and are described separately. Grant benefits are based upon the estimated cost of maintaining a modest standard of living in the country of assignment. Benefits are not intended to duplicate U.S. salary levels or the standard of living of U.S. diplomatic personnel. Grant benefits authorized by ECA are paid in U.S. dollars through the Council for International Exchange of Scholars (CIES).

1. Travel and Relocation
 - a. Unaccompanied and/or Excess Baggage
 - b. Relocation Allowance for expenses such as visa fees, permits, medical exams, immunizations, etc. This is a fixed sum in each grant and may not reimburse all expenses completely.
2. A monthly **maintenance allowance** is provided to cover recurring subsistence needs such as housing, fuel, utilities, and food.
3. Monthly **base stipend**

PRIOR TO YOUR ARRIVAL

Travel to Benin

Grantee air travel is coordinated by the travel agency, HRG Worldwide, which will bill IIE or CIES directly for the costs of your tickets. HRG staff will assist you with your reservation and then send your reservation to IIE or CIES for approval. You must book a round-trip ticket with a return date that corresponds to the grant end date. All air travel and all air shipments paid for with United States Government funds must conform to the Fly America Act, which requires that all such travel and shipments be on “U.S. flag” airlines where such service is available.

Travel within Benin

There is no municipal bus system in Cotonou, so most Beninese rely on taxis or motor scooters. We strongly advise any Fulbrighter planning to use a motor scooter to bring a U.S. standard motorcycle helmet. Helmets may also be purchased in Cotonou, but will be more expensive. Taxis (motor scooters) are inexpensive in Cotonou, with a ride within the city costing approximately 700 CFA francs (less than \$2).

The used car market is dynamic, but more expensive than in the U.S. Several grantees have bought used cars with which they were generally pleased. Plan to spend several weeks to a month in the selection process, and arrange to have the vehicle inspected by a reputable mechanic before agreeing to purchase it.

Fulbrighters should obtain an international driver's license from AAA before leaving the U.S. Driving in Benin is difficult, dangerous, and very different from driving in the U.S. Insurance should be obtained locally, and should include liability coverage.

Renting a car is another possibility, although very expensive at about \$55/day. A car and driver can be hired for about \$1,400 per month.

Visas and Residence/Work/Research Permits

Grantees should take copies of all identification certificates and documents, including marriage and birth certificates, driver's licenses, etc., to your assignment country. Make photocopies of the first two pages of your passport, which should be kept separate from your passport in case of loss or theft. Also bring extra passport photos for obtaining visas and conducting other business.

Visas

Fulbrighters are responsible for obtaining their own visas BEFORE leaving the U.S. Fulbrighters and their families should obtain tourist visas at the Embassy of Benin in Washington, DC.

Embassy of the Republic of Benin
2737 Cathedral Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20008
Tel: (202) 232-6656; Fax: (202) 265-1996

Fulbrighters are advised to clarify the duration and number of entries of the visa, and request a multiple-entries visa for the entire duration of the grant.

Once in country, PAS staff will assist in adjusting visa status and obtaining work permits. This procedure takes about a week. Fulbright grantees cannot receive pay for work during the term of their grant. Work permits for dependents are very difficult to obtain. There are no paid opportunities available for dependents of Fulbrighters to work in the U.S. Embassy, but such opportunities may exist on a contract basis through USAID. Additionally, paid employment on the local job market is extremely scarce and requires French language fluency. If such employment is obtained, salaries are far below the U.S. scale. If you are bringing a spouse or partner to Benin, please contact the PAO well in advance to obtain a list of contact names and numbers for their job search.

Research Clearance

Anyone desiring to conduct research in Benin should seek affiliation with a local research institute. This is a simple procedure, and affiliation is generally granted. Most research institutes expect researchers to provide a copy of the results of the research. Lecturers have affiliation through their university assignment. A copy of the affiliation letter plus a letter requesting research authorization should be addressed to the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research.

Sending and Receiving Mail

Books and Educational Materials sent by Diplomatic Pouch

Fulbright scholars may use diplomatic mail for a one-time shipment of a **maximum of four 8.5"x11" copy paper-size boxes** of educational materials. Permission for outbound shipment of the materials has been authorized by the Department of State. Materials cannot be sent back to the U.S. by pouch.

For the four boxes of books, the use of sturdy boxes and reliable mailing tape such as filament (strapping) tape is strongly recommended. Each box must **weigh no more than 50 pounds**. **The combined volume of the entire shipment must not exceed 6 cubic feet**. The grantee will be responsible for shipment costs if the limit is exceeded. Boxes are handled very roughly in transit. Overloaded boxes or flimsy boxes will split. Boxes sent through the diplomatic pouch are neither registered nor insured. Most boxes eventually arrive at the post. However, it is recommended that Fulbrighters not send anything in the boxes that cannot be replaced. Shipping time for boxes is hard to predict, so plan on six to eight weeks in transit. Put a valid return address in the upper left corner and repeat the return and forwarding addresses on notes inside the boxes.

All Fulbright boxes are considered "official mail" and for that reason are subject to security scanning for contents and irradiation to guard against biological (i.e. anthrax) contamination. Books and bound documents have apparently not been damaged by scanning. Photographs and single sheets of paper may be damaged, becoming yellowed and brittle. Slides or any thin plastic materials such as transparencies are destroyed. There have been reports of CDs being melted by the irradiation process.

ADDRESSING THE PACKAGE:

Return address in the upper left-hand corner:

Grantee Name
Street Address
City, State Zip

Address label:

Public Affairs Officer
Department of State
2120 Cotonou Pl.
Washington, DC 20521 - 2120

In lower left-hand corner of the box write:

UNCLASSIFIED VIA AIR POUCH
Your Name
FULBRIGHT SCHOLAR EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

Grantees sending only one package should write "1 of 1" in the lower right-hand corner. Grantees sending more than one package should number each package in a series and circle the markings, e.g., "1 of 3", "2 of 3", and "3 of 3".

CAUTIONARY NOTE: In the past, abuse by several Fulbright scholars caused near-revocation of privileges for all program participants. Anyone who violates pouch regulations will be barred from use and will have to make other arrangements for handling personal and professional correspondence.

International mail is efficient and reliable for shipping additional educational materials and personal effects. You may want to compare costs of sending additional personal effects by unaccompanied airfreight in comparison to international mail.

Computers

There should not be a problem bringing a computer for personal use. PAS will inform the Foreign Ministry that the computer is for personal use only and will be re-exported when the Fulbrighter finishes his/her stay in Benin. Computers should be carried with you - as carry-on luggage if at all possible - and the rest of your personal effects. Carry documentation on brand, serial number, and value of the computer in case this information is requested by customs.

Local computer support varies. There are several local internet service providers available at a reasonable cost. Electrical power is 220v and fluctuates wildly at times. PAS Cotonou recommends using high quality voltage regulators or surge protectors. If none is available for 220v in the U.S., you can purchase one locally for about \$70-\$100, although it is sometimes difficult to determine the quality. Be prepared to deal with electrical power fluctuations, dust, and insects, which can damage sensitive electronic equipment.

Schooling for Dependents

Contact the Community Liaison Officer at CLOCotonou@state.gov for the latest information on schooling possibilities. There are private schools with an English curriculum at both grade school and secondary school levels. English language schooling outside of Cotonou is very limited.

PAS AND EMBASSY SUPPORT

In an effort to support U.S. Fulbright scholars/ students and their families, the following services are provided by PAS and the Embassy:

Personal Security

A security brief will be arranged by the PAO with the Embassy Security Officer upon a Fulbright recipient's arrival in Benin to provide the latest information about Benin's security situation.

While street crime, especially within Cotonou, occurs and continues to rise, Benin is still relatively safe by U.S. urban standards. Most robberies and muggings occur along the Marina Boulevard and the beach near the hotels frequented by international visitors. Some of the incidents reported have involved the use of force, often by armed persons, with occasional minor injury to the victim. Visitors should exercise caution and avoid isolated areas. Up-to-date Security information can be found at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1066.html.

Arrival and Temporary Lodging

PAS Cotonou will meet the Fulbright lecturer at the airport and arrange for temporary lodging if necessary, but all travel arrangements must be communicated to PAS **at least two weeks** in advance of travel. In general, both Fulbright researchers and students make their own arrangements for airport reception. Students who would like assistance with arrival and temporary lodging should advise Post through IIE. Please advise the PAS through CIES/IIE of your itinerary **at least two weeks** in advance of your departure from the U.S. Grantees are responsible for covering the cost of temporary lodging.

Upon arrival in Benin, contact the PAO to arrange for PAS and Embassy briefings on services, security, and health issues. As a precaution in case of emergencies, you are required to register with the U.S. Embassy and to keep PAS and the Embassy Consular Section informed about your local address, telephone, and fax numbers.

Check Cashing

Contingent upon the Ambassador's approval, U.S. Embassy Cotonou will allow Fulbright professors, researchers, and students to cash personal or travelers' checks for local currency (CFA francs), subject to the same rules and regulations applied to Embassy staff. Checks are usually limited to the equivalent of \$500 per day, with exceptions granted if special conditions warrant. You should consider establishing overdraft service with your U.S. bank to cover any overdrawn checks, which may occur because of slow mail service for sending and receiving bank statements and deposits. We also recommend that scholars carry U.S. dollar travelers' checks and a major credit card. Travelers' checks and a credit card are essential for initial

expenses, travel outside Benin, and emergencies. Fulbrighters using credit cards should check with the credit company about what services are available in West Africa.

Local Health Services and Access to Embassy Health Facilities

Fulbright scholars and students do not have access to the Embassy health facilities. Grantees may consult the Embassy Health Unit for information on health services available locally.

Medical coverage and evacuation insurance for all dependents is essential. Please also note ECA's ASPE grantee health benefits and medevac coverage is only available for the grantee in Benin; not dependents. If you have plans to travel outside of the country, you need to have your own separate policy. IIE and CIES can provide suggestions for various carriers.

The quality of local health care is mixed; most basic services are satisfactory. While the quality of available dental care has improved, PAS Cotonou recommends that you have all anticipated dental work before leaving the U.S. Travelers to Benin are reminded that a regimen of the recommended anti-malaria medication is essential before, during and after the visit.

Mosquito nets and mosquito repellent are essential, as is sunscreen. While the nets are available locally, good quality repellent and sunscreen are generally more easily available and less expensive in the states, so PAS Cotonou recommends bringing a supply with you. Also be advised that a high level of HIV positive infection is reported in some populations.

All visitors must have valid yellow fever inoculations stamped in their health cards. The Embassy Health Unit particularly recommends immunization vaccines for hepatitis B, hepatitis A, and typhoid. Current booster/vaccines against childhood diseases (tetanus-diphtheria, polio, measles/mumps/rubella) are strongly recommended for adults as well as children. Drinking water should be boiled for 10 minutes, and fresh vegetables and fruits should be thoroughly cleaned in a disinfecting solution.

If using prescription drugs, you should bring supplies sufficient for the length of stay. Transport all prescription drugs in the original containers for simpler clearance through customs. Be certain to carry with you basic information that will enable a medical professional to help you quickly, efficiently, and properly should it become necessary.

Permanent Housing for Lecturers

In recent years, the apartment offered to U.S. Fulbright lecturers by the university has not been in good condition. A cooperative agreement has been signed between the Embassy and the university and they provided a furnished apartment two years ago. The Fulbright lecturer must secure alternate arrangements in case he/she does not want to live in that apartment. The housing allowance will be adjusted to cover rental of modest accommodations. Housing will not meet U.S. standards, but generally has electricity and running hot and cold water. Please note that homes (even U.S. diplomat homes) are subject to regular electricity blackouts, water shortages and electrical fluctuations due to the lack of reliable power and water infrastructure that exists in Benin. Electricity and water tend to be restored after 4 - 6 hours, but on very rare occasions it can be out for days. PAS staff will assist with making temporary hotel reservations for a Fulbright grantee if grantees request Post assistance in advance.

GRANTEE RESPONSIBILITIES

Reporting Requirement

One of the requirements of the Fulbright award is submission of two reports: at the mid-term stage of the assignment and a final report prior to departing from the host country. Fulbrighters will receive instructions from CIES or IIE, as appropriate, on how to file reports on-line.

2012 MISSION HOLIDAYS SCHEDULE

HOLIDAY	DAY OF WEEK	DATE	COUNTRY
NEW YEAR'S DAY	SUNDAY	JANUARY 01	B
NEW YEAR'S DAY	MONDAY	JANUARY 02	A
TRAD. RELIGIOUS DAY*	TUESDAY	JANUARY 10	B
BIRTHDAY OF M. L. KING	MONDAY	JANUARY 16	A
MAOULOUD	TBA	TBA	B
WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY	MONDAY	FEBRUARY 20	A
EASTER MONDAY	MONDAY	APRIL 09	B
BENIN LABOR DAY	TUESDAY	MAY 01	B
ASCENSION DAY	THURSDAY	MAY 17	B
WHIT MONDAY	MONDAY	MAY 28	B
MEMORIAL DAY	MONDAY	MAY 28	A
U.S. INDEPENDENCE DAY	WEDNESDAY	JULY 04	A
FIRST DAY OF RAMADAN	TBA	TBA	B
BENIN INDEPENDENCE DAY	WEDNESDAY	AUGUST 01	B
ASSUMPTION DAY	WEDNESDAY	AUGUST 15	B
U.S. LABOR DAY	MONDAY	SEPTEMBER 03	A
COLUMBUS DAY	MONDAY	OCTOBER 08	A
TABASKI	TBA	TBA	B
ALL SAINTS DAY	THURSDAY	NOVEMBER 01	B
VETERANS DAY	MONDAY	NOVEMBER 12	A
THANKSGIVING DAY	THURSDAY	NOVEMBER 22	A
CHRISTMAS	TUESDAY	DECEMBER 25	A/B

Key:

A = American holiday

B = Beninese holiday

TBA = To be announced depending on local Muslim interpretation of the lunar Islamic Calendar

* = Traditional religious holiday

Top 10 Culture Interests

A description can be provided upon request sent to the Cultural Affairs Assistant.

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| 1. <i>La Mosquée centrale de Porto-Novo</i> | 7. <i>Le Village souterrain de Agongointo à Bohicon</i> |
| 2. <i>Le genre oral guèlèdè</i> | 8. <i>La religion</i> |
| 3. <i>Les tata tammari</i> | 9. <i>Le festival de la Gaani</i> |
| 4. <i>Le village des Taneka Koko</i> | 10. <i>La route de l'esclave au Bénin</i> |
| 5. <i>AKABA IDENA</i> | |
| 6. <i>Le Village lacustre de Ganvié</i> | |